

**Talbot County Tourism Board  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, December 11, 2019  
8:30 a.m.  
Talbot County Community Center  
10028 Ocean Gateway, Chesapeake Room, Easton, MD 21601**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

**Board Members Present:** Al Silverstein, Ben Simons, Harold Klinger, Jeff Schneider, Judy Bixler, Kelley Cox, Ian Fleming, Laura Price, Mark Salter, Kim Weller, Cassandra Vanhooser

**Board Members Absent:** John Booth, Angela Eade

**Staff:** Sam Shoge

**Recording Secretary:** Candace Harris

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the October meeting were presented. Jeff Schneider moved that the minutes be accepted with any necessary corrections. Kelley Cox seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote. The report of the November meeting was also distributed. There was not a quorum at the November meeting and no legislative action was taken.

**III. Old Business**

**2020 Travel Guide:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism was required by the County's procurement rules to issue an RFP for the travel guide after four years with the same company. Two bids were received on Monday, December 9, 2019. Ms. Vanhooser will make a recommendation to the County Council after the bid packages are evaluated. Advertising sales will commence in January.

If anyone has a new event or a new attraction, Ms. Vanhooser asks that the information be submitted as soon as possible. Mr. Simons said that the Academy Art Museum renovations will be complete by the end of March and will reopen in April. The Waterfowl Festival's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is in 2020. Robert Morris Inn's 10<sup>th</sup> year

anniversary will also be in May 2020. Jeff Schneider said that the Hampton's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is August 2021.

**Short-Term Rental Update:** The debate about short-term rentals continues. The date of the work session with the County Council for short-term rentals is December 18, 2019, at 5:00 p.m. at the Talbot County Community Center Wye Oak Room. Ms. Vanhooser encouraged those who are interested to attend.

The Short-Term Rental Board has submitted a list of recommendations for the County Council to consider. Ms. Cox asked that the Board consider making a recommendation on a 2-night minimum instead of the recommended 3-night minimum. Ms. Vanhooser noted that written comments are due December 12, 2019, at noon to Council offices, and she offered to help draft a letter supporting the change to a 2-night minimum.

Jeff Schneider made a motion that the Tourism Board submit such a letter to advocate for this change; Ian Fleming seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Price reported that the Short-Term Rental Review Board has been having work sessions that are open to the public. The board has come back to the County Council with more than 30 recommendations. Ms. Price said that the County Council did not respond to the previous letter from the Tourism Board asking for inclusion in the process because it has always been a public process. Ms. Price invited the Tourism Board to attend the meeting on December 18.

#### **IV. New Business**

**Tourism Numbers:** Ms. Vanhooser distributed the recent Economic Impact Study results for Talbot County. All categories have increased, which is a very positive sign for the economy.

**Accommodations Tax:** Mr. Klinger asked for time to discuss a potential increase in the County's accommodation tax rate. He distributed a chart listing all of the accommodations rates for jurisdictions around the state, noting that Talbot County has the lowest rate. He also said that the last time Talbot County raised its accommodations tax rate was in 2005.

The recommendation from Mr. Klinger is a 2% increase bringing the total to 6%, spread over two years. Mr. Schneider asked what the accommodations tax of Delaware. Mr. Silverstein said the accommodations tax in Delaware is 8%.

Mr. Klinger said that if the accommodations tax rate is raised, the Board should consider requesting a different allocation. Ms. Price then discussed the County's revenue cap, the upcoming ballot initiative to again try to modify the cap, and the implications if it fails. Ms. Price believes that the extra money raised from accommodations should go to the County's general fund to help cover the costs of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. She also suggested the Board make a recommendation to

Council before we put the property tax question on the ballot. Ms. Vanhooser said that the last day to file with Annapolis is February 4, 2019.

After a great deal of discussion, Board members did not vote to request an increase in the accommodations tax rate. Everyone agreed that the issue requires more research and discussion before making a recommendation to the County Council.

Ms. Vanhooser thanked Jordan Lloyd for preparing breakfast for the meeting, and she reminded the Board that we have cookbooks for sale which would make great Christmas presents.

- V.** Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.
- VI.** Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:55 am. The next Meeting will be held on January 8 at 8:30 a.m.